

1550 AD Persian Wardrobe

Pirahan (chemise) of patterned cotton with long, tight fitting sleeves.

Ziri qaba (under tunic) of burgundy cotton with long tight fitting sleeves.

Ruyi qaba (upper tunic) of burgundy and green striped cotton with large open sleeves to elbow.

Hair braided and wrapped around the head.

Head covering is a pale green cador (veil).

Shoes would be embroidered slippers with pointed toes.

Jewelry consists of gold rings, a bracelet, and earrings.



GENERAL NOTES

Persia was united under Safavid rule during much of the 16th century (Bacharach 42, 105). The Safavids provided a measure of stability in an otherwise turbulent era and encouraged a climate in which the arts and sciences could flourish.



Miniature painting was very common during this time. These paintings were meant to illustrate one episode from a story and were published in book form. Although most of the materials used in the paintings were of good quality and have held up well over time, some of the pigments have discolored. However, after viewing some of these miniatures, there are still some assumptions about clothing that can be made: women wore multiple garments, one over the other, and those garments are cut with the greatest conservation of fabric possible.

There are four basic elements to women's clothing in Persia: pants, foundation garment (piranha), multiple layers of robes, and some type of head covering. Pictorial evidence shows that these elements have persisted at some level of Persian society from 500 BC until almost the present day. There are very few surviving garments that definitely come from 16th century Persia. The fabrics available were produced locally, in other Islamic controlled regions, and imported from Europe. Linen, silk, cotton, and wool were all produced locally (al-Hassan 182). Because cotton and silk were widely available, it is likely that they were commonly used in garments of that time. Brocaded silks and cottons were also available.

Persian miniature paintings employ both vivid and muted colors of clothing, colors that are also available from textile dyes. Shades of brown, green, blue, red, yellow, orange, and pink were used. The dyes used for textiles were derived from animal or vegetable sources. Depending on the mordants used, both brilliant and muted shades can be obtained from a single dye source (al-Hassan 1765-6).

Pants (salwar) were worn by both sexes in the Islamic controlled regions of the 16th century. There are several hadith (traditions of the Prophet) which recommend pants that are at least knee length (Friedman). I have used a pattern from Rashid's web page (<http://home.earthlink.net/~lilinah/Rashid/Rashi0.html>) for making my pants.



The foundation garment (pirahan) is made using geometric construction of rectangles, triangles, and squares. The pattern is very simple and conservative of fabric. It is usually about mid-calf in length, relatively tight to the body and has long tight sleeves.

The neck opening is traditionally open to the naval, and then fastened at the neck with a button. This garment would have traditionally been of white silk, linen, or cotton.

Robes are the most visible garment. They are made of rectangles, squares, and triangles, and are highly conservative of fabric. These robes all have long sleeves and can vary from ankle length to knee length. My wardrobe consists of two different layers of robes including the ankle length under robe of burgundy cotton, and the shorter outer robe of striped fabric. I have chosen to have the under robe with a round neckline and the outer robe with a v-neckline. Each layer is shorter than the other so that all layers are visible both at the neckline and at the hem. Necklines varied from round to v-necked.

Throughout most of Islam's history, women were veiled. I have chosen the large shawl-type veil. This style does not normally cover the face unless the woman wearing it holds it there. It is worn draped around the head and shoulders, and reaches to the knees or lower. It can be left to hang free or be wrapped closely around the body.

SALWAR

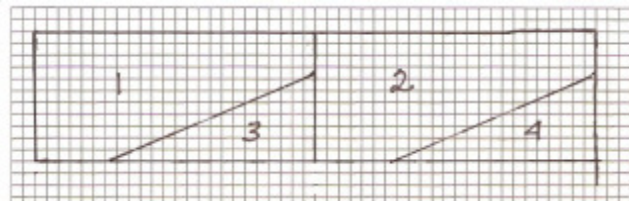
LAYOUT AND CUTTING DETAILS

MATERIALS

- 3 yards of 45" fabric
- sewing thread

MEASUREMENTS

- To measure the minimum outseam length, measure from the waist, over the fullest part of your buttock and down to the floor behind one leg. Add 2" for the waistband casing, and 1" for seam allowance.
- Use the full width of the 45" fabric, folded, for the pants.
- To determine crotch depth, sit on a chair and measure from the chair seat to the waist. Add 2" for the waistband.
- The ankle measurement is just large enough to get the foot through. Point the foot and measure around the ankle and heel. Add 1" for ease, and 1" for seam allowance.
- 1-2 = salwar leg
- 2-4 = gussets



CONSTRUCTION NOTES

General Sewing Tips:

1. It is very important to pre-shrink all fabric and trim. Treat the fabric as you would after the garment is complete.
2. All seams are to have 1/2" seam allowances.
3. Zigzag all edges to prevent raveling.
4. Backstitch 1/4" at the beginning and end of each seam to keep seam from coming out.
5. Pin pieces of fabric being sewn together before sewing to keep fabric from slipping and edges together while sewing.
6. Always put "right" sides of fabric together when sewing.
7. Mark "wrong" sides of material if necessary with a chalk pencil or soap as pieces are cut out.

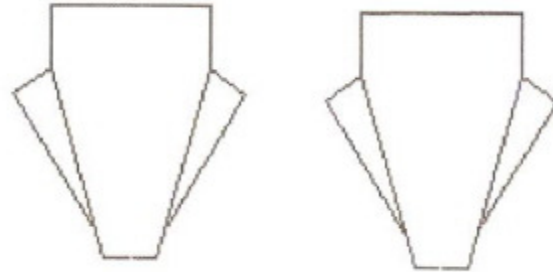
SEWING DIRECTIONS

Step 1

Cut out all pieces and label for ease of identification. There should be two leg pieces and four crotch gussets.

Step 2

Sew the crotch gussets on each side of the leg pieces.



Step 3

Sew each leg up the inseam.



Step 4

Turn one leg inside out. Insert right-side out leg into the inside-out leg. Sew each crotch seam. Leave a 2" opening in front for the drawstring.



Step 5

Sew the drawstring casing at the waist.

Step 6

Finish the ankles with a narrow hem.

PIRAHAN OR ROBE

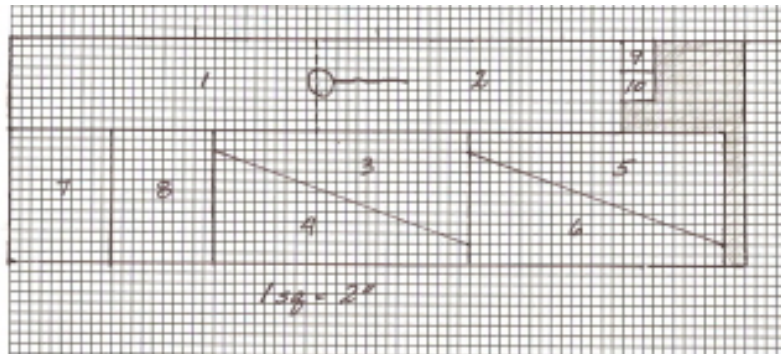
LAYOUT AND CUTTING DETAILS

MATERIALS

- 3 yards of 54" fabric or 4 yards of 45" fabric per layer
- sewing thread
- trim as desired

MEASUREMENTS

- _____ A = twice your height (or the desired length of the robe)
 - _____ B = shoulder width + 1"
 - _____ C = sleeve width + 1 "
 - _____ D = sleeve length + 1"
 - _____ Half the sleeve width
-
- 1 - 2 = main body
 - 3 - 6 = side gores
 - 7 - 8 = sleeves
 - 9 - 10 = gussets



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3. Zigzag all edges to prevent raveling.
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SEWING DIRECTIONS

Step 1

Cut out all pieces and label for ease of identification.

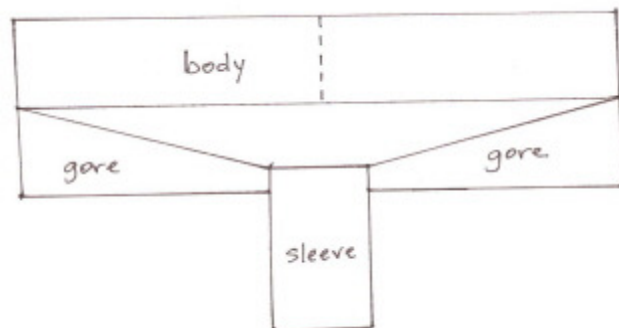
Step 2

Finish the neck edge by sewing a rolled hem. Approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ " above the end of the slash, bar tack across the opening to reinforce the lower end of the opening. Follow these steps to make a fine rolled hem. It involves two passes around the fabric, the first to turn the fabric, and the second to anchor the roll.

- Choose the finest thread you can find. Also use a small needle.
- Fold over a tiny amount (less than $\frac{1}{9}$ " of fabric) just once.
- Put a knot in the end of the thread and take a stitch or two through the folded layer.
- Take only one stitch (through 1 thread of the fabric) beneath the raw edge, and then take a stitch about $\frac{1}{8}$ " to the right on the top of the fabric near the fold.
- Repeat by going back to the bottom under the raw edge about another $\frac{1}{8}$ " in distance. Basically you are doing a tiny zigzag just under the raw edge and the top near the fold.
- Complete between 6 and 8 of these stitches and then pull the thread. The fabric will roll, with a varying degree of closing together.
- Go around the neckline edge again using a tiny hem stitch to hold down any gaps from the previous steps.

Step 3

Attach the side gores to the edge of the sleeves. Be sure that the bias edge of the side gores is at the top.

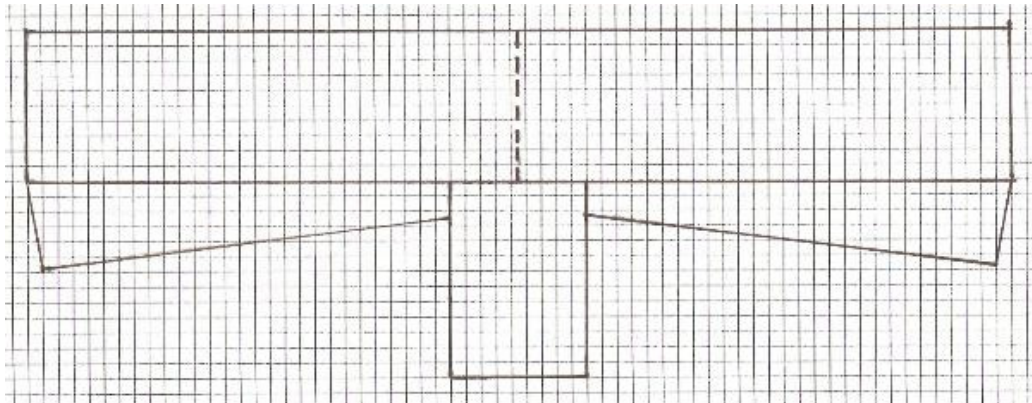


Step 4

Sew the entire gore and sleeve assembly to the side of the main body piece being careful to center the sleeve at the shoulder point.

Step 5

The shirt or robe should look like this if laid flat. This is a good time to iron out the seams if you haven't already done so.



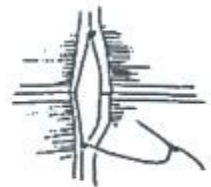
Step 6

Add any decoration such as embroidery, trim, etc.



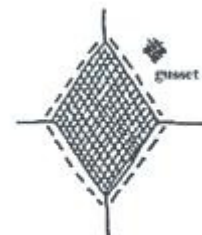
Step 7

Sew up the side seams leaving 6" open under the arm in both directions. This is where the gusset will be inserted.



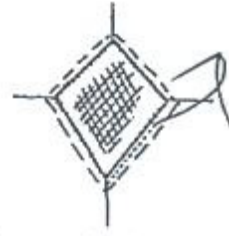
Step 8

With the wrong side of the garment toward you, stitch the gusset piece to the robe. Match one of the corners of the gusset with the top of the slit. Allow 1/2" seam allowance. Pin in place. Do the same in the opposite corner.



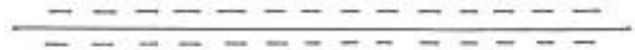
Step 9

Now hold the garment as shown and the gusset will form a triangle between the main garment and the sleeve. Pin the other two edges of the gusset and sew in place.



Step 10

Seams should all be finished. Fold under the raw edges to the outside and hand stitch a running stitch down either side of the seam.



VEIL CONSTRUCTION

Veils are perhaps the easiest costume element to devise; they are simply rectangles of fabric. Silk works best because it has a drape similar to that of veils shown in Persian miniature paintings. Perhaps the best way to devise a veil pattern is to drape various squares of fabric of different weights and sizes. Compare these attempts to the desired results and modify as necessary. Another way would be to let a measuring tape dangle over your head from left to right the length you want the veil to be. Cut a rectangle this length and finish with a turned hem.

Follow these steps to make a fine hem to the veil. It involves two passes around the fabric, the first to turn the fabric, and the second to anchor the roll.

- Choose the finest thread you can find. Also use a small needle.
- Fold over a tiny amount (less than 1/9" of fabric) just once.
- Put a knot in the end of the thread and take a stitch or two through the folded layer.
- Take only one stitch (through 1 thread of the fabric) beneath the raw edge, and then take a stitch about 1/8" to the right on the top of the fabric near the fold.
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